

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 101

SP 014 057

AUTHOR Lumpkins, Bob G.
 TITLE Elementary Education Methods Block and Professional Laboratory Experiences.
 PUB DATE 79
 NOTE 11p.
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Field Experience Programs; Grouping (Instructional Purposes); *Learning Laboratories; *Methods Courses; Observation; *Preservice Education; Student Attitudes; Student Behavior; *Teacher Education; Tutoring

ABSTRACT

The general organizational and instructional procedures employed in teaching a methods course are described. The essential features that characterized the methods program are described in terms of the preservice teacher's role, the role of the instructor, grouping patterns employed, and teaching experience. A great deal of emphasis is given in this program to laboratory and field activities with traditional lecturing held to a minimum.
 (JD)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED177101

GILBERT
Superase

Elementary Education Methods Block
And Professional Laboratory Experiences

A Program Description

By

Dr. Bob G. Lumpkins, Coordinator
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches, Louisiana 71457

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Bob G. Lumpkins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT
OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SP014057

Spring, 1979

Abstract

This program was conceived and developed from the basic belief that teachers will most likely view the teaching process according to how they were actually taught and not necessarily how they were instructed to teach. The general organizational and instructional procedures employed in the teaching methods classes approximates those employed in the elementary school classroom. A great deal of emphasis is given to laboratory and field activities.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION METHODS BLOCK
AND PROFESSIONAL LABORATORY EXPERIENCES

A. Operational Description

The program designed herein represents an attempt to overcome some of the deficiencies inherent in the traditional teaching methods courses. Previously, we were content with the assurance that each preservice teacher had a knowledge of good teaching procedures, skills, and necessary subject matter content; however, the correlation between knowledge and continued application of these teaching behaviors is not as high as desired. Emphasis upon application of teaching behaviors and the shaping of attitudes and personality are vital components of this program.

When most of us became certified teachers we were like the farmer who, when he was asked why he was not using modern methods, replied, "Heck, I ain't farming now half as well as I know how". Hopefully, the extent of this problem is lessened in the present program by emphasizing application of teaching behavior and the shaping of attitudes toward teaching.

Teachers will most likely view the teaching process according to how they were actually taught and not necessarily how they were instructed to teach. Acquisition of information regarding logically and psychologically sound teaching procedures will have less effect upon the shaping of teacher behavior than will the way in which this knowledge was acquired. This has been our entrapment in the traditional lecture oriented teacher education program. In order to break this repeating cycle, the methods classes are designed to place the preservice teacher in the role of an inquirer and the methods teacher as a facilitator or catalyst. In the pursuit of problem solving, various teaching strategies,

activities, and materials are utilized.

The essential features which characterize the methods program are described in terms of the preservice teacher's role, role of the instructor, grouping patterns employed, and teaching experiences.

B. Role of the Preservice Teacher

Each preservice teacher's responsibility is to become the most capable teacher he or she can within the limits of time and individual ability. The conditions and resources for development of understandings, skills, and attitudes are made available; however, the ultimate professional development and use of these conditions and resources lie with the individual. Accordingly, the following assumptions are made.

- (1) Upon completion of three years of a teacher education curriculum, the undergraduate student is ready to assume the responsibilities of a professional educator.
- (2) The preservice teacher willingly accepts and fulfills delegated responsibilities.
- (3) The preservice teacher willingly takes the initiative in planning and executing learning activities.
- (4) The preservice teacher strives to exceed minimum requirements as prescribed in methods courses and those requirements in the observation-participation program.
- (5) The preservice teacher is capable of budgeting his time and effort so as to fulfill all specified requirements.

C. Role of the Methods Instructor

If an atmosphere conducive to a good learning environment is to exist, the preservice teacher must feel that we have a sincere interest in him personally. This realization can only be achieved by frequently taking the time to sit down to talk with the preservice teacher in a one-to-one situation. Elimination of, or modification of, the time schedules have provided more opportunities for

personal contact between instructors and the preservice teacher. Since large group instruction is used sparingly, the methods instructors have more time to work with individual students and with small groups. Also, the instructors are in the methods laboratory throughout the day to assist or confer with the preservice teachers. The setting may be in an office, classroom laboratory, or wherever the situation dictates.

Although the character of the methods courses remain distinguishable, there are many occasions when these courses overlap. Depending on the situation, an instructor provides leadership and assistance in keeping with his personal expertise and interest. If the learning situations in progress at a given time are self directive, the instructor may move into another area where he may be of immediate assistance. An infinite number and types of problems may be dealt with during any specific period of time.

D. Schedule

The actual operation of the methods schedule is so structured so as to fulfill all university requirements and to provide opportunities for experiences which foster desirable behavioral changes. Attendance records are kept, examinations are periodically administered, etc. in the same manner as any other university course; however, procedures and policies in the daily activities of this program are quite unlike the traditional lecture oriented class.

Fluidity of movement from one learning area to the next and flexibility of time schedules are key factors. Methods courses are taught in a four hour time block Monday through Friday. The first few minutes of each class is much like any other class. Attendance is checked and questions of concern to the group are discussed. Following this the preservice teacher may:

- (1) Work individually or in a small group on tasks extending from the last

class period;

- (2) go to another learning area to continue work on an activity relative to one of the methods courses;
- (3) obtain permission to leave the laboratory area and go elsewhere to utilize a particular resource. This alternative is used with close supervision.

Exceptions to the above procedures would be when topics are introduced, special presentations are given, or when general comprehensive tests are administered in a large group setting. Other activities of the day are so arranged in order to provide for any desired time block and group size. At least one hour per day is spent in an elementary school classroom carrying out specified observation-participation activities. Also, part of the daily four hour methods block involves planning sessions and directed activities with elementary school children. Preservice teachers are involved in various aspects of the program throughout the day, therefore, most are enrolled only in the methods courses during the semester preceeding student teaching.

E. Instructional Grouping in the Methods Block

A variety of instructional grouping patterns are employed to facilitate attainment of program objectives.

- (1) Large group: Lecture sessions are utilized sparingly. This type of instructional grouping is basically used to introduce and disseminate information relative to a new area of study. All methods class sections frequently are combined in this case so as to avoid duplication of effort and waste of instructional time. This grouping pattern may be used eight or nine times per methods course each semester.
- (2) Small group: This type of instructional grouping is the type most frequently used. One example of this pattern would be when five or six preservice teachers work together in discussing, and/or demonstrating a skill, experiment, or teaching method. Another example illustrating use of this pattern would be when a small group of preservice teachers engage in compensatory type work to master noted weaknesses and/or misunderstandings.

- (3) Individual: Certain objectives denote individual responsibility. Example of these would be those objectives concerning unit and lesson planning, projects, experiments, and research. Even though these are primarily considered individual responsibilities, the preservice teacher is assisted by the instructor and usually consults with peers.

Many of the stated objectives for each methods course imply, directly, and indirectly that some research is required before understanding and mastery can be adequately achieved.

F. Actual and Simulated Teaching Experiences

The acquisition of knowledge and skills relative to the teaching process has limited value unless the individual has an opportunity to apply these in practical situations. An individual's competence to teach should be measured according to performance in a teaching-learning situation and not solely upon the ability to verbalize concepts describing the teaching process. Teaching experiences such as micro-teaching, demonstration teaching, tutoring, and the observation-participation program in the university laboratory school are pre-planned experiences which continue throughout the semester.

- (1) Peer Lessons: The "team" or "sharing" approach prevails throughout many, if not most, of the methods laboratory activities. In helping a peer to understand particular concepts or processes the preservice teacher may operate within the teacher role. In this situation the preservice teacher is encouraged to follow sound pedagogical procedures in much the same manner as they would in working with children. This setting provides a relatively safe ground for evaluating one's own ability to teach. An added benefit is the development of self-confidence fostered through success in helping another person achieve.
- (2) Micro-teaching: Each preservice teacher plans and teaches approximately seven micro-lessons during the semester. In this particular program the micro-lesson is defined as a segment of a lesson which is observed and evaluated. The sessions are usually between five to eight minutes in length and are recorded on video tape.

Before a micro-lesson is taught the preservice teacher must develop a lesson plan according to the criteria discussed in class. For example:

1. The micro-lesson should be an extension of the elementary school pupils regular classwork.
2. Both the methods instructor and the elementary school children's teacher must be informed about the content of the lesson to be taught.
3. The objectives are to be stated in terms of pupil behavior and the procedures must be well defined.

The preservice teacher and the methods instructor both view the replay of the lesson and prepare separate written evaluations. These evaluations are then compared in regard to effective and ineffective techniques and suggestions for improvement. The evaluations along with the lesson plan are then filed for later reference.

When considered as isolated teaching sessions these brief views of teaching performance have limited meaning; however, when these are analyzed throughout the semester they have added significance. Teaching styles, strengths, and weaknesses are quite discernible.

- (3) Demonstration Teaching: This technique is used when it is felt that a particular procedure or method must be seen in operation before it can be clearly understood. The fact that actual participation is limited is somewhat compensated for when the demonstration teacher -
 - a. explains the plan to the group of preservice teachers prior to teaching the lesson;
 - b. points to specific things to look for as the lesson develops; and
 - c. summarizes the events occurring during the lesson and answer questions raised by the observers.

The greatest exposure of the preservice teacher to demonstration teaching, however, is in the course of regular class activities in the methods classes and in their participation in the observation participation program.

(4) Tutoring: Each semester from 20 to 50 elementary education majors participate in the reading tutoring program as a part of their senior year "methods block" of study. Tutor training is accomplished during 8 - 10 hours of concentrated study and practice as a part of a required reading methods

course. The instruction of the tutors includes emphasis on human relations, diagnosis of reading strengths and weaknesses, writing lesson plans, reading in content areas, etc..

After a few weeks of training, the tutors are assigned an elementary pupil at North Natchitoches Elementary School (Public school). The pupils are chosen by their teachers because they are having some difficulty in reading. The Northwestern tutors work with their respective charges a total of twenty four times during the semester (twice a week).

The program is designed to give NSU students an opportunity to work on a one-to-one basis with a child; to really get to know him and understand his needs, frustrations and fears. The North Natchitoches setting is different from the Northwestern Lab School where they are engaged in "Observation-Participation", therefore giving them another perspective of the teaching-learning situation. The tutoring program also gives the students an opportunity to put into practice techniques taught in the methods course. Students use many materials that they have constructed themselves.

The principals and faculty at North Natchitoches are pleased to have NSU students in their school to assist in the instructional process. The children being tutored are happy to have a friend who can spend almost twenty hours helping them to read better.

G. Observation Participation Program

This phase of the teacher education program fulfills these critical functions -

- (1) Application of teaching skills in an actual elementary school classroom under the supervision of an experienced teacher;
- (2) provides for an opportunity to gain ideas and resources for teaching;

- (3) bridges the gap between the preparatory aspect of the teacher education and the practicum (student teaching).

During the regular semester each preservice teacher spends at least seventy hours in the observation-participation program. It is not unusual for a preservice teacher to log one-hundred or more hours. Every preservice teacher has extensive classroom and professional experiences in all curricula areas prior to student teaching.

All of the professional participants in the program recognize the importance of solidifying the objectives and experiences in the methods program with the objectives and experiences in the observation-participation program. Means by which this goal are accomplished are as follows:

- (1) Laboratory school teachers are provided with a copy of the objectives for the methods courses along with a brief overview of the planned activities for the semester.
- (2) Laboratory school teachers plan their preservice schedules so as to provide observation-participation in all areas of the curriculum.
- (3) Certain activities and experiences are jointly planned by the methods instructor and the laboratory teachers.
- (4) Both formal and informal communiques are made between methods instructors and laboratory school teachers in regard to the preservice teachers' progress and/or problems.